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People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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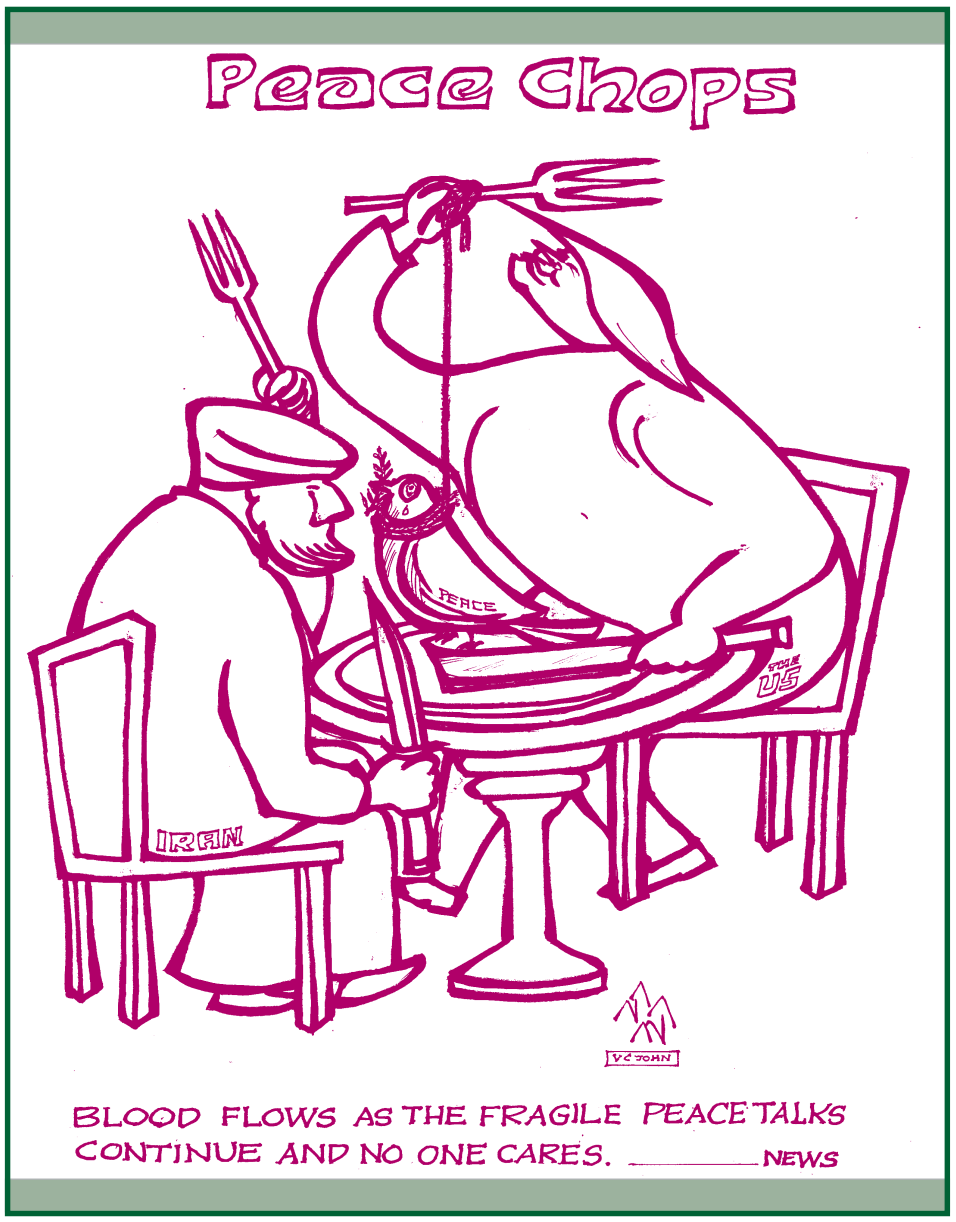

Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society

Inauguration of the Yearlong Celebrations of the 70th Anniversary of the CISRS

"Revamp Genuine Public Witness in India"

The CISRS was born in the context of Tambaram Missionary Conference that embarked on a national Indian church and Indian Christian Theology. Dr. Russel Chandran, P. D. Devanandan, M. M. Thomas, E. V. Mathew, Chandran Devanesan and Eddy Asirvadam initiated a platform to equip Indian churches and Theological Academia to respond to the socio-political issues of the society. The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS) was registered in 1957.

The inauguration of the yearlong celebrations of the 70th Anniversary of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS) was held at the Mar Thoma Council Chamber, Tiruvalla, on 17th June 2026.

Welcoming all those who assembled for the inaugural function Rev. Dr. Y. T. Vinayaraj, Director of the CISRS said, "It is a historical moment in the life of the institute when its friends and wellwishers gather together and rededicate themselves to the original cause of the CISRS".

Rev. Dr. Packiam T. Samuel, the Chairperson of the CISRS, presided over the function and he called upon the gathred friends of the CISRS, to re-dedicate themselves to the cause of the CISRS and work together to offer a public witness in India.

The Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan who inaugurated the event highlighted the role played by M. M thomas and P. D. Devanandan, in and through the CISRS in India.

Inaugural Function of the Yearlong Celebrations of the 70th Anniversary of the CISRS
Main leaders: Rev. B Wellington, General Secretary, CLS, Er. Sanjeev Dayanand, Treasurer CISRS, Dr. Ella Sonawane, Associate General Secretary, ISPCK, Rev. Dr. David Joy, President BTESSC, Most Rev. Thomas K. Oommen, Former Moderator of the CSI, Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Rev. Dr. Packiam T. Samuel, Chairperson of CISRS, Dr. Sarosh Koshy, Asia Secretary, Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ, Dr. Sonajharia Minz, Vice-Chairperson, CISRS, Rev. Dr. Y. T. Vinayaraj, Director, CISRS and Rev. Christy Abraham, Program Secretary of CISRS.

The Metropolitan said, "It is a great honour and privilege for the Mar Thoma Church to host the Inauguration of the Year-long Celebrations marking the 70th Anniversary of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS). Known as the research arm of Indian churches, the CISRS has connections with the land of Kerala and the Mar Thoma tradition. We affirm the interconnection between the CISRS and the Mar Thoma Church". Dr. M. M. Thomas was a member of our church, and we owe him a great deal for instilling new ecumenical visions within the legacy of the Mar Thoma Church. He began his public ministry in the 1940s, associated with Manganam Christhavasramam, where he upheld the principles of Gandhian socialism and laid theological foundations that influenced both national and global ecumenical movements and their Christian social thought. Whenever we discuss ecumenical social thought, we cannot help but remember M. M. Thomas, For his legacy. We thank God".

Contd. Page 5 Col. 1 ..>>>

Christian Conference of Asia
an organ and fellowship of churches and ecumenical councils in asia for initiating and facilitating dynamic christian witness and action

Rev. Jung Eun 'Grace' Moon installed as the Eleventh General Secretary of CCA

Rev. Jung Eun 'Grace' Moon was installed as the Eleventh General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in a solemn service held in conjunction with the Executive Committee meeting of CCA on 5 June 2026.

Rev. Moon succeeds Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, the Tenth General Secretary. **Upon assuming office, she will become the second woman to serve as General Secretary of CCA. –** ***CCA News***

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People's Reporter
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US-Iran Agreement: Hopes and uncertainties

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the US and Iran on 18 June, to end the war brings great relief to the direct victims in Iran, Lebanon, Israel and Gaza, and to the entire world suffering from price rise and other grave problems owing to its impacts. The unprovoked war started by bombing on a girls' school and other places in Iran on 28 February jointly by the US and Israel caused death of over 6000 persons in Iran and over 3000 persons in Israel, Lebanon, Gaza and some countries in West Asia; and destruction of innumerable infrastructure-facilities including oil refineries in Iran and Israel, and US military bases in West Asia. Blocking of traffic through the strait of Hormuz caused fall in the supply of oil and essential commodities, and the consequent price rise across the world.

Regime change and destruction of nuclear capability of Iran within one week was the declared objective and expectation of the aggressors. They not only failed to achieve these objectives, but also suffered heavy losses in the war; and Iran was proved invincible. Further, public opinion against the war mounted in the US, Israel and across the world. Realising the defeat, the US has been seeking negotiations to end the war. It is after failure of the two-week ceasefire in April, this MoU for a ceasefire was signed.

Main pledges by the US in the MoU are:1. Lifting sanctions against Iran 2. Lifting naval blockade 3. Withdrawal of forces from the area 4. Release of frozen Iranian assets and 5. $300 billion assistance of private funds for Iran's economic recovery. Main pledges by Iran are: 1. Restoration of full traffic through the strait of Hormuz, and 2. Discussion on her nuclear programmes. For Iran, human sufferings, casualties and destruction of wealth cannot be compensated. However, Iran got everything it demanded: a ceasefire (including in Lebanon), withdrawal of US troops, lifting of sanctions, unfreezing of assets, and $300 billion in investment for reconstruction. These gains are in exchange for nothing but the renunciation of nuclear weapons (which they did not even have before the war) and unblocking of the strait of Hormuz (which was not blocked before the war). Therefore, this agreement is a triumph of Iran's diplomacy. It is also a blow to Israel's ambitions and political, military and diplomatic defeat to 'global hegemony'.

Obviously, it is to avoid further damage, the US sought peace with Iran without the consent of Israel. The discord between the US and Israel has already appeared in public. Benjamine Netanyahu proclaimed that Israel is not a party to the agreement and that his country will continue war with Iran. President Trump accused Netanyahu for forcing him to join the war. Therefore, one cannot rule out President Trump withdrawing from the agreement due to his unpredictable behaviour, and Netanyahu continuing war in Iran and Lebanon.

The agreement has already brought great relief to the entire world. The price of oil per barrel that went up to $120 from $75 has almost come down to the pre-war level. This brings great relief to the people across the world. However, one has to be afraid of the fate of the agreement due to the disagreement of Netanyahu and the unpredictable behaviour of President Trump. Despite these uncertainties, we wish that this agreement would become an instrument for lasting peace in West Asia.

Thought for the Fortnight

"Peace is not made at the council table
or by treaties,
but in the hearts of men."

– Herbert Hoover

H. H. Pope Leo XIV
The Pope with a Difference

George Mathew

For Pope Leo,
the mission of the Church is:
" A Church that walks,
a Church that always
seeks peace,
that always seeks charity,
that always seeks to be close
especially to those who suffer."

We have the youngest Pope in History. That is: H.H Pope Leo who occupies that chair of Pope which began with St. Peter. Pope is the bishop of Rome, head of the worldwide Catholic Church, supreme (sovereign) pontiff.

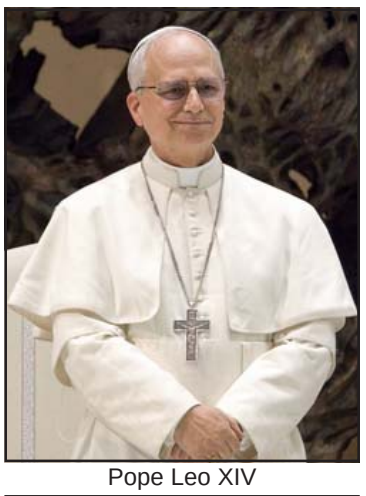
Pope Leo XIV was born in U. S. A. (Chicago) and he is the first Pope from the United States of America. He grew up in a Catholic family, and his childhood was marked by a strong religious upbringing. In 1977 he entered the order of St. Augustine and in 1982 he was ordained as priest. Then his career included: missionary, parish priest, diocesan official, seminary teacher and administrator. Then he got an unexpected position: he was elected as the Pope in Vatican. Then, he held different roles in Vatican including President of the Pontifical Commission of Latin America, Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops in Rome. He had to deal with the contemporary issues like climate change, international migration, church governance, and human rights.

For Pope Leo, the mission of the Church is:

" A Church that walks,
a Church that always
seeks peace,
that always seeks charity,
that always seeks to be close
especially to those who suffer."

When Israel and Iran continue the war and Israel targeted Iran's nuclear facilities and military bases; and Iran retaliating with missiles (78 people were killed and nearly 320 were injured). **Pope Leo said: "It is the duty of all countries to support the cause of peace by initiating paths of reconciliation and promoting solutions that guarantee security and dignity for all".**

Pope Leo is against Artificial Intelligence (AI). He is of the opinion that AI can reinforce "the stereotype or ideological bias of their developers and designers".



Pope Leo XIV

As the President of the United States and the Pope of the world Catholic Church are from the United States; it is natural to think that they work together as colleagues and friends. But President Trump has only criticism of Pope Leo XIV saying that Pope is "weak on crime" and "terrible on foreign policy". He specifically targeted Pope for his opposition to the ongoing war on Iran. Trump alleged that the Pope is endangering Catholics and others because he is supporting Iran. For Trump, the Chicago born Pontiff is a " politician ". At the same time, Pope has stated that he is "not afraid of the Trump administration or speaking out loudly about the message of the Gospel".

Following that statement by the President, Secretary of State, Marco Rubio visited Vatican and met the Pope and discussed the situation in the Middle East and other topics of mutual interest. It was followed by the visit of Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson (his trip was funded by the city and private donors) to talk about the values they share: protecting voting rights and protecting workers' rights. **It is important to note that Pope has been consistent on these issues.**

Dr. George Mathew
is the Chairman
of the Institute of Social Sciences,
New Delhi

In April this year, Illinois public officials (Illinois Municipal League) travelled to Vatican. This trip was known as "Illinois Mayor's Public Diplomacy Mission". They discussed with Pope the issues like international engagement, cultural exchange, Diplomacy.

During his visit to Spain, Pope Leo went to a notorious epicentre of European migration. There, he challenged the countries to uphold the migrants' rights. He shamed the leaders, including Christians, who turned the migrants away. When he went to the Pot of Arguineguin in the Canary Islands in 2020, he dubbed it as a "dock of shame" because of the squalid conditions in which the migrants were forced to live.

Pope Leo XIV made history as the first Pope to address the Spanish Parliament, delivering a message of unity, reconciliation, and moral guidance.

The Pope Leo XIV's address to the Spanish Congress of Deputies on June 9, 2026 marked an unprecedented event in Spanish History, as no previous Pope has spoken before the country's parliamentary chambers. **The speech was part of his six-day apostolic visit to Spain, which also included: Madrid, Barcelona, Montserrat and the Canary Islands, focussing on migration, social justice, and the Catholic Church's accountability for clergy abuse.**

In his forceful speech Pope urged the global leaders to avoid dividing their electorate with 'sterile simplifications' to gain popularity; instead listen to World's cries for peace. ●

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Burning Issues of Today's World: An Overview

V. Mathew Kurian

[Third and concluding part of the article 'Burning Issues of Today's World: An Overview']

The world is presently in a very bad situation. We have identified in this paper eight major issues. These issues are structurally interdependent. We need a systematic approach to resolve them. A new world order is required to free this situation. As a multilateral forum, UNO is engaging in various capacities to resolve the burning issues of the world today. But the UN has constitutional limitations in its interventions. We need a functionally more effective UN organization, and affiliated institutions to tackle the situation. The consciousness of the entire world has to be aroused for this – we need an ethical resurgence for global resilience.

VI. Widening Inequality

Already we have noticed growing inequality as a factor weakening democratic institutions. In this section, we look deeply into the extent of current global inequality as a burning issue of the world today. According to the World Inequality Report (2026) of Paris School of Economics, the richest 10% of individuals hold at least 75% of global wealth, while the bottom 50% own less than 2%. Income is also heavily skewed. In highly unequal regions, the top 10% take home two thirds of total income. In India, the top 10% earn 58% of the national income.

Oxfam's latest report on global wealth and inequality, reveals that billionaires' fortunes have grown at rates three times faster than in the previous five years. Twelve billionaires are owning the wealth of half of world's population. The richest 1% of world's population control 45% of global wealth. Forty four percent of global population live with less than $6.85 per day. The report highlights that about 60% of billionaire wealth is unearned — derived from inheritance, cronyism, monopoly power, and modern-day colonial structures that favour the colonial North.

VII. Galloping Inflation

Inflation simply means sustained increase in the general price level. There are different degrees of inflation like mild inflation and hyper inflation. Creeping inflation galloping usually happens. When hyper inflation is highly unpredictable, galloping stability is undermined, and inflation hardly hit the poor and the fixed income earners.

In recent times, inflation has become a burning issue in the global economy. The emerging global geopolitical crisis and the economic crises promote it. The ongoing wars and sanctions imposed by imperial powers have led to major supply chain disruptions everywhere. There are countries like Argentina and Turkey which experience inflation rate beyond 30% — Venezuela's current annualized inflation rate stands at 611.86%. It is the Middle East war that provides the resultant energy crisis sustaining the possibility of skyrocketing of prices everywhere in the world.

VIII. Deepening Environmental Threats

Though the universe has infinite planets and planetary systems, so far, only the earth is privileged with life. For humans, earth is our 'common home'. The earth is environmentally conditioned to sustain life. The great economists like K.E. Boulding and Barbara Ward qualify earth as 'Spaceship earth'. Life in this spaceship is protected by ozone layers. The life in this planet is safeguarded by natural replenishing of air, water and food. But the undue intervention of humans is making grave threats to all forms of life.

Dr. V. Mathew Kurian is the Joint Director of Dr. K. N. Raj Centre of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala

The following are the major environmental threats.

1. Global Warming and climate change:

Earth's global surface temperature has increased by roughly 1.25 to 1.42°C compared to pre-industrial levels. This warming is empirically driven by unprecedented Greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations and human activities. High environmental temperature is posing a grave threat to the ecosystem and human life.

2. Terrific bio-diversity loss

The new pattern of economic growth requires over consumption of earth's resources. As a result we experience exhaustion of species both in flora and fauna. A 2020 WWF report found that the population sizes of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles and amphibians have experienced a decline of an average 68% between 1970 and 2016. **The report attributes this biodiversity loss to a variety of factors but mainly habitat loss due to conversion of forests, grasslands and mangroves into agricultural systems.** A 2021 analysis found that the sixth mass extinction of wildlife on Earth is accelerating. More than 500 species of land animals are on the brink of extinction and are likely to be lost within 20 years.

3. Plastic Pollution

A major menace to environmental sustainability is plastic pollution. In 1950, the world produced more than 2 mn tons of plastic per year. By 2015, the annual production increased to 419 mn tons, enhancing plastic waste in the environment. Presently, about 14 mn tons of plastic make their way into the oceans every year harming wildlife habitats and the animals that live in them.

4. Resource Exhaustion:

Increasing resource depletion makes the life of humans and other animals and birds very vulnerable. Water scarcity would be accentuated in the coming times.

IX. Conclusion

The world is presently in a very bad situation. We have identified in this paper eight major issues. These issues are structurally interdependent. We need a systematic approach to resolve them. A new world order is required to free this situation. As a multilateral forum, UNO is engaging in various capacities to resolve the burning issues of the world today. But UN has constitutional limitations in its interventions. We need a functionally more effective UN organization, and affiliated institutions to tackle the situation. The consciousness of the entire world has to be aroused for this - we need an ethical resurgence for global resilience. ●

Changing Ecclesial Landscape in Asia: Challenges to the Ecumenical Movement

>>> Contd. from Page 5 Col. 5

The broader church in Asia is experiencing significant growth. However, this growth has fuelled a shift away from traditional and historic churches or denominations toward independent, non-denominational, and charismatic churches. China, the largest remaining communist country in the world, is predicted to become one of the world's largest Christian populations. Conservative estimates indicate that China may currently have between 100 million and 130 million Christians, despite strict religious regulations and restrictions on the free propagation of the Gospel. The Chinese authorities control Christianity by sanctioning only a set number of churches. Yet, underground or 'house churches' keep popping up, like Bible study groups that gather in houses or coffee shops and McDonald's stores. **In South Korea, Christianity has experienced significant growth since the 1960s, making the country second only to the United States in the number of Christian missionaries it sends overseas. Mongolia, which remained a closed society for decades under communist rule, has also witnessed rapid Christian growth since the country's democratic transition in 1990. Since the late 1990s, the Church in Mongolia has expanded primarily through church-planting initiatives.** The contemporary Mongolian Church is predominantly Protestant and largely comprises of young, first-generation Christians who gather for fellowship and in house churches.

Christianity is also continuing to grow steadily in communist and Buddhist countries such as Vietnam and Laos. In Vietnam, the second-largest communist country in the world, Christianity is the second-largest religion today, representing roughly 8 to 10 per cent of the total population of 102 million people. The Christian community is made up primarily of Roman Catholics and Protestants. Three decades ago, the Christian population in Vietnam, including Roman Catholics and Protestants, was only around 1.2 million. With approximately 7 million Roman Catholics, Vietnam is home to one of the largest Catholic communities in Asia. It is widely recognised as one of the most vibrant, characterised by numerous priestly and religious vocations and thousands of baptisms annually. At the same time, Protestant churches in Vietnam are also experiencing rapid growth.

In many parts of Asia, "Crypto-Christians" or "hidden Christians" are gradually increasing. More individuals are converting to Christianity but maintaining their faith in secret, appearing to practice the dominant religion of their community in public to avoid persecution, social ostracism, or loss of economic benefits. This phenomenon is prevalent particularly in regions where religious freedom is restricted or conversion carries significant social consequences. Many crypto-Christians do not change their religious or faith identity to ensure their conversion remains invisible. In some cases, they may still participate in local cultural activities associated with their original faith. A common trend in East Asian and some Southeast Asian countries is that many who identify as Christians are not members of any church, nor do they attend Sunday services regularly. Yet, they identify as believers in the Christian faith.

Despite the growth of Christianity in Asia, in most Asian countries, the rapid growth of new generation Christian missions is influenced by conservative theological and missiological emphases rooted in American fundamentalist and evangelical movements. Asia's newer forms of Christianity often operate with support from conservative independent evangelical and Pentecostal missionary networks, para-church organisations, and transnational megachurch partnerships. In other words, the current wave of Christian outreach missions in Asia is, by and large, in the fundamentalist orbit; both mainline denominations and new-generation independent churches are taking the lead in introducing such initiatives. ●

To be continued

In the next issue

Asia becomes a primary centre of 'Reverse Missions'?

Climate and Biodiversity - 7

Lessons from Nature's Delicate Balance

Mathew Koshy Punnackadu

**From an eco-theological perspective,
bats serve as a profound reminder that all life is fundamentally interconnected.
They are equal participants in the community of creation,
holding a rightful place in the planetary balance.
When human greed, short-sighted consumerism, and environmental destruction rupture
these relationships, the consequences inevitably circle back.
They return as extreme weather, food insecurity, economic instability, and pandemics.
Protecting the natural world is no longer just an act of charity;
it is a matter of self-preservation.**

Since the outbreak of the Nipah virus in Kerala and other parts of South Asia, bats have found themselves cast in a villainous role. Once treated as mere nocturnal curiosities, they have become objects of intense fear and suspicion. When a colony is spotted roosting near a home, school, church, or orchard, the immediate human reaction is often one of hostility — an impulse to drive them away, chop down their roosting trees, or eradicate them entirely.

Yet bats are not enemies of humanity. They are among the most ecologically indispensable, yet profoundly misunderstood, creatures on Earth.

Today, the triple crises of climate change, accelerating biodiversity loss, and emerging zoonotic diseases (diseases that jump from animals to humans) have forced a global reckoning. The complex relationship between bats and human societies has taken centre stage. If we hope to protect both human health and ecological integrity, we must look past our fear and understand the delicate balance these silent guardians maintain.

Silent Guardians of Biodiversity

To appreciate the gravity of the threats bats face, we must first appreciate their numbers. **Bats constitute nearly one-fifth of all mammal species on Earth. Far from being pests, they function as the invisible scaffolding of many global ecosystems, quietly performing roles that keep our world alive.**

In tropical regions, fruit bats act as the primary engines of forest regeneration**. They are long-distance seed dispersers, dropping seeds across vast, degraded landscapes where birds often fear to fly**. Without them, forest recovery would grind to a near-halt, leading to a catastrophic decline in biodiversity.

Other bat species **are specialised pollinators of night-blooming plants**, ensuring the survival of countless wild trees and economically vital crops. Meanwhile, **insectivorous bats act as nature's organic pesticide**, consuming tons of insects every night. This saves the global agricultural sector billions of dollars annually in crop damage and heavily reduces our reliance on chemical pesticides. **Far from being dangerous invaders, bats are vital partners in maintaining a healthy planet.**

Habitat Loss and Climate Stress

Despite their resilience, bats are highly sensitive to environmental disruptions. Today, they are caught in a pincer movement between aggressive habitat destruction and the volatile shifts of a changing climate.

Traditionally, fruit bats preferred the canopy of tall trees in dense forests, undisturbed mangroves, and pristine wilderness. These environments offered safety, stable microclimates, and reliable seasonal food. However, relentless deforestation, urban sprawl, quarrying, and road construction have shattered these habitats.

With their homes destroyed, bats are adapting the only way they know how: by moving closer to us. They are now frequent residents in village trees, agricultural plantations, school compounds, and urban parks—a trend documented heavily across South Asia. **It is vital to note that bats are not seeking out human contact. They are refugees of an ecological crisis, adjusting to a world where humans have encroached upon their territory, rather than the other way around.**

Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu is presently the Commissioner, Climate Justice and Sustainable Development of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu is the Project Director of the CSI Community Development Programme And the Exceutive Editor of the International Journal of Climate Justice.

Compounding this displacement is the direct impact of climate change:

● **Mass Mortality from Heatwaves:** Bats have strict physiological thermal limits. In places like Australia, extreme summer heatwaves associated with global warming have caused thousands of flying bats to drop dead from trees in a single afternoon.

● **Drought and Volatile Seasons:** Prolonged droughts disrupt the flowering and fruiting cycles of trees, plunging fruit bats into severe food shortages.

● **Wildfires:** The increasing frequency and intensity of forest fires across the globe wipe out ancient roosting sites in a matter of hours.

Driven out by chainsaws and baked out by rising temperatures, bats are forced into new geographies, seeking food and shelter wherever they can find them.

The True Source of Disease Spillover

It is a biological fact that bats naturally harbour a wide array of viruses—including Nipah, Ebola-related viruses, and various coronaviruses—usually without getting sick themselves. This is thanks to their unique evolutionary traits and hyper-efficient immune systems, which are adapted to handle the intense metabolic stress of flight.

However, the presence of a virus in a bat is not a direct threat to humans. The threat emerges only when the ecological boundaries separating us are broken down.

When forests are fragmented, the natural buffer zones disappear. Stressed, hungry bats are forced to forage in backyard orchards, livestock pastures, and urban gardens. This increased proximity creates a highway for viruses to jump from wildlife to domestic animals, and ultimately to humans, often through fruits contaminated with bat saliva or urine.**Emerging infectious diseases are usually not a sign that wildlife is dangerous, but rather indicators of ecological imbalance caused by habitat loss, biodiversity decline, and environmental change**.

Reclaiming Harmony

From an eco-theological perspective, bats serve as a profound reminder that all life is fundamentally interconnected. They are equal participants in the community of creation, holding a rightful place in the planetary balance.

When human greed, short-sighted consumerism, and environmental destruction rupture these relationships, the consequences inevitably circle back. They return as extreme weather, food insecurity, economic instability, and pandemics. Protecting the natural world is no longer just an act of charity; it is a matter of self-preservation.

Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities

The story of the bat is a microcosm of the larger planetary crisis. It highlights the direct, unbreakable loops connecting climate change, biodiversity, and human health.

Instead of reacting with fear and demonising these essential mammals, society must pivot toward addressing the root causes of our ecological imbalance. We must protect our remaining primary forests, aggressively restore degraded ecosystems, combat climate change, and learn the art of peaceful coexistence with urban wildlife.

Healthy forests create healthy boundaries. Healthy ecosystems create healthy communities. By protecting bats and giving them the space they need to thrive, we ultimately protect ourselves, ensuring a safer, more harmonious future for all of creation. ●

When Youth Raise Questions: A Prophetic Reading of Protest and Power

>>> Contd. from Page 6 Col. 5

contemporary societies where criticism is often dismissed as disloyalty. **The prophet demonstrates that questioning authority is not necessarily an act of rebellion; it can be an act of moral responsibility. A healthy society should not fear difficult questions about unemployment, inequality, corruption, or institutional accountability. The prophetic tradition teaches that truth-telling is not the enemy of patriotism but one of its highest expressions.**

What it Means to Know God?

Perhaps Jeremiah's most profound insight appears in his understanding of what it means to know God. Reflecting on the reign of King Josiah, he writes: "He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me? declares the LORD" (Jer. 22:16). This is a remarkable statement. **Knowing God is not defined primarily by religious slogans, rituals, or public displays of faith. It is measured by justice, compassion, and concern for the vulnerable. In Jeremiah's theology, genuine spirituality and social responsibility cannot be separated.**

Conclusion

For Christians and churches, Jeremiah's message is both a challenge and an invitation. The church is called neither to baptize every protest nor to reject every criticism. Rather, it is called to listen carefully for the cries of the vulnerable and the concerns of the young. Sometimes the questions raised by youth outside the church mirror questions that also exist within it; questions about participation, dignity, fairness, opportunity, and belonging.

Jeremiah reminds us that God often speaks through uncomfortable voices. The task of the church is not merely to defend institutions but to discern whether they reflect justice, mercy, and truth. If the concerns of young people are ignored, society and the church alike risk missing an important prophetic call. But if churches and institutions listen, discern, and reform, they may discover that youth protest is a prophetic gift rather than a threat. ●

Changing Ecclesial Landscape in Asia: Challenges to the Ecumenical Movement

Mathews George Chunakara

[Second part of the article 'Changing Ecclesial Landscape in Asia: Challenges to the Ecumenical Movement']

The broader church in Asia is experiencing significant growth. However, this growth has fuelled a shift away from traditional and historic churches or denominations toward independent, non-denominational, and charismatic churches. China, the largest remaining communist country in the world, is predicted to become one of the world's largest Christian populations. Conservative estimates indicate that China may currently have between 100 million and 130 million Christians, despite strict religious regulations and restrictions on the free propagation of the Gospel. The Chinese authorities control Christianity by sanctioning only a set number of churches. Yet, underground or 'house churches' keep popping up, like Bible study groups that gather in houses or coffee shops and McDonald's stores.

When Pope John Paul II delivered the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation 'Ecclesia in Asia at the beginning of this century', he began by recalling "The Marvel of God's Plan in Asia". It stated: "Because Jesus was born, lived, died and rose from the dead in the Holy Land, that small portion of Western Asia became a land of promise and hope for all humanity. Jesus knew and loved this land. He made his own, the history, the sufferings and the hopes of its people. He loved the people and embraced their Jewish traditions and heritage. God, in fact, had, long before, chosen this people and revealed himself to them in preparation for the Saviour's coming. And from this land, through the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church went forth to make 'disciples of all nations' (Mt 28:19)".

The Holy Father expressed his hope "With the Church throughout the world, the Church in Asia will cross the threshold of the Third Christian Millennium marvelling at all that God has worked from those beginnings until now".

More than three decades ago, Pope John Paul II also expressed a similar hope in his address to the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), held in Manila in 1995. He stated his hope "In the Third Christian Millennium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent."

Changing ecclesial landscape in Asia: Multiple reasons

When we reflect on, and analyse, the changes taking place in the ecclesial landscape across different Asian contexts, we can clearly observe significant transformations occurring for multiple reasons. **As the number of adherents to the Christian faith in Asia increases, the projected numerical growth of Christianity is also expected to be substantially higher.** Christianity is growing rapidly in Asia, and the continent's Christian population is estimated to exceed 415 million in 2026, with the fastest growth among Christian believers in most rural-to-urban areas in countries such as China, Vietnam, Nepal, Mongolia, and Cambodia. Other countries, including Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Malaysia, are also reported to have growing Christian communities, with many of these new believers belonging to urban, middle-class, and upper-middle-class ethnic Chinese communities. The establishment of thriving faith communities through churches and prayer groups or prayer fellowships in both urban centres and rural areas, has become an increasing trend, indicating that Christianity's growth rate continues to climb in Asia. This growth is driven largely by evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic movements. The Asian continent is now home to the world's second-largest Christian population, characterised by high levels of participation. Another emerging trend in many Asian countries is the coexistence of institutional churches and alternative Christian communities, including house churches, hotel-room congregations, rooftop churches, and cyber churches. These newer expressions of Christian community, often shaped by contemporary worship practices and flexible congregational structures, are commonly referred to as "interdenominational" fellowships or non-denominational worshipping communities.

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara was the General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). He previously served the World Council of Churches (WCC) in the Geneva Secretariat as Asia Secretary and Director of the Commission on International Affairs.

Several new trends are transforming Asian Christianity, including the rapid rise of independent Pentecostal/ charismatic movements. Alongside traditional Pentecostal churches, numerous independent Pentecostal and charismatic groups are emerging, often offering highly contemporary and technology-driven worship services. In the widespread modern form of Pentecostalism, each congregation operates independently under the leadership of a single pastor or leader, without organisational or structural ties to established Pentecostal denominations. This model of independent leadership within Pentecostalism, now one of the fastest-growing Christian movements in Asia, represents a significant new development in the region's ecclesial landscape. Cities across South and Southeast Asia are becoming key hubs where faith, culture, and modern life intersect, shaping the evolution of Christian communities in new ways. Ministers/pastors in many mainline churches express concern that growing numbers of members are withdrawing from regular Sunday worship while still identifying themselves as Christians. This phenomenon, frequently described as "believing without belonging," has become one of the major challenges facing many Asian congregations. In several major Asian cities, the number of "de-churched" Christians is also increasing. These are individuals who continue to identify themselves as Christians and may previously have belonged to institutional church communities, but who have intentionally distanced themselves from formal church membership and participation. At the same time, other religions in Asiaare also facing similar patterns of disaffiliation. In some East Asian societies, the number of people leaving organised religion is among the highest in the world. Nevertheless, many of these religiously unaffiliated individuals continue to maintain strong spiritual beliefs and practices, including belief in God or unseen spiritual realities, participation in ancestral rites, and recognition of spiritual significance in nature. Studies suggest that in countries such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Vietnam, large segments of the population, including Christians, continue to observe traditional rites, particularly those related to ancestors, and maintain a deep sense of spirituality rooted in the region's religious and cultural heritage.

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Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society

Inauguration of the Yearlong Celebrations of the 70th Anniversary of the CISRS

"Revamp Genuine Public Witness in India"

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"The pressing question today is how CISRS can promote grassroots mediation within both the church and society to encourage love, reconciliation, and peace. I hope that the new endeavors of the CISRS will renew our commitment to fostering a community of peace and justice and will inspire fresh visions for humanization, as emphasized by M. M. Thomas".

The Metropolitan said, "However, Dr. Thomas is not the only pioneer behind the formation of the CISRS. Others, such as P. D. Devanandan, Russell Chandran, Chandran Devanesan, E. V. Mathew, and Eddy Asirvadam, also played significant roles. CISRS was established as a branch of many ecumenical visionaries, and we recognize the contributions of sister churches like the Church of South India and the Church of North India, as well as the Methodist Church and Christian higher education institutions like Madras Christian College and Women's Christian College, Chennai. The current leadership of the CISRS comprises members from various churches and faith communities, bringing honour to the Institution. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation for Dr. Packiam T. Samuel and his team for their excellent work at CISRS".

The Metropolitan said, "CISRS programmes and publications offer updated knowledge and connect Indian theological academia with secular institutions. I recently learned that the CISRS has initiated a publication on post-secularism in collaboration with Indian secular colleges like JNU and Jamia Millia, New Delhi. We affirm the role that the CISRS has played in shaping Indian Christian theology, and it continues to do so. As we inaugurate this year-long celebrations of the 70th Anniversary of the CISRS, we hope that its impact will resonate in both the public and private spheres of the church and theological academia in India".

Concluding his Inaugural Address, the Metropolitan said, "As we gather here I emphasize the importance of research and studies, particularly regarding the history of Christianity in India and its transformative role in society. We are facing challenging circumstances characterized by political and cultural totalitarianism. Vulnerable communities are being marginalized, minorities are suffering, and migrants and immigrants are often sidelined. Simultaneously, there is an alarming acceptance of war, conflict, and genocide within certain religious circles. The pressing question today is how CISRS can promote grassroots mediation within both the church and society to encourage love, reconciliation, and peace. I hope that the new endeavors of the CISRS will renew our commitment to fostering a community of peace and justice and will inspire fresh visions for humanization, as emphasized by M.M. Thomas. In the name of the Triune God, I hereby inaugurate the year-long celebrations of the 70th anniversar y of CISRS".

The Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. Sarosh Koshy, Asia Secretary of the Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ.

Felicitations were offered by Rev. Dr. David Joy (President BTESSC), Dr. George Mathew (Founder Director, ISS Delhi), Prof. Dr. Mammen Varkey (Director, Vichara), Dr. Varughese George (President, M. M. Thomas Memorial Charitable Trust, Thiruvalla), Prof. Dr. Sonajharia Minz (Vice Chairperson, CISRS). Mr. Sanjeev Dayanand (Treasurer, CISRS) proposed the vote of thanks. Very. Rev. Thomas K. Jacob (Senior Vicar General, Mar Thoma Church) led the closing prayer and the Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan offered the Benediction. ***– CISRS News***

Young People's Column

The Cockroach Janata Party, the Holy Spirit, and the Hermeneutics of 'Subversive Calmness'

Wesley P. Kuruvilla

On what began as a perfectly fine morning on May 15, 2026, the highest courtroom in India suddenly felt less like a hall of justice and more like a stage set to condemn the country's youth. Speaking directly to an entire generation trying to find its foothold, the Honourable Chief Justice of India, let drop a painful remark: *"There are already parasites of society who attack the system, and you want to join hands with them? There are youngsters like cockroaches; they don't get any employment, and they don't have any place in a profession. Some of them become media, some of them become social media, some of them become RTI activists... and they start attacking everyone."*

Naturally, a formal judicial clarification was rushed out the very next day, explaining that the court only meant to call out "fraudulent credential holders," not the millions of young people genuinely looking for work. But the sting was already felt, the damage was done. For a generation already carrying the quiet, overwhelming weight of unemployment and feeling invisible to the system, the "cockroach" verdict had been delivered. And the words hurt because they came from the very 'supreme top.'

Instead of meeting anger with anger, they chose the quiet weapon of the vulnerable - a sharp, peaceful irony. They held a satirical mirror up to the conscience of the state, taking a cruel insult and turning it into a source of shared strength. They made sure the real pain, the cries, and the lives of those on the margins could no longer be trampled underfoot for nothing.

Yet, on the not-so-fine morning of May 16, 2026, these supposed "pests" decided to answer back not with rocks, but with brilliance. A digital tsunami swept across India under the name of the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP). The logic was beautifully simple - if the powerful were going to view them as insects, they would find comfort in each other and form a community. Operating like a grassroots movement of the streets, the CJP completely out-shined traditional political parties by leaning into what can only be described as 'subversive calmness'. **Instead of meeting anger with anger, they chose the quiet weapon of the vulnerable - a sharp, peaceful irony. They held a satirical mirror up to the conscience of the state, taking a cruel insult and turning it into a source of shared strength. They made sure the real pain, the cries, and the lives of those on the margins could no longer be trampled underfoot for nothing.**

For anyone who reads the gospels, this entire drama feels remarkably familiar. Long before the era of blue checks, algorithms, and paid promotions, the Holy Spirit was already at work as the Greatest Influencer of All Time - an

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Presbyter of the CSI Madhya Kerala Diocese, is currently pursuing M.Th. studies in New Testament at the United Theological College, Bangalore.

organic, deeply human force that changed human history simply by moving through the hearts of ordinary, everyday people. **In the Greek text of the New Testament, this divine presence is given a warm and legal name, the *parakletos*. It means an advocate, a defense attorney who walks into the room and stands right next to the person everyone else is accusing.**

While an earthly judge sat on a high bench looking down at the youth, it makes us wonder whether the heavenly Advocate was already drafting a defense rooted in dignity and truth. As Jesus promised in John 16:13, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears..." In a public square that often feels loud with fake promises and institutional gas lighting, a youth movement standing firm in quiet calmness looks exactly like a space where the *Paraclete* may have stepped in to defend human value against cold, structural arrogance and injustice.

Jesus promised that this divine Advocate knows exactly how to expose the world's unfairness: "And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and justice and judgment" (John 16:8). **The Holy Spirit is that quiet, corrective voice that steps into the room when earthly systems reveal their biases against the weak. The *Paraclete* has always specialized in taking up cases for people the world has already written off, acting as a protector for the lonely and despised: "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you... When the Advocate comes... the Spirit of truth... he will testify on my behalf" (John 15:18, 26).**

This brings us to a satirical, yet deeply heartbreaking contradiction in our religious spaces today. Right now, while the institutional churches in India seem occupied with making political compromises, tolerating corruption, and seeking influence and rooting for power through a very shallow style of 'public witness,' the secular "cockroaches" of the CJP are out on the actual pavement doing the real, compassionate and just work of the kingdom. They are the ones standing up for human dignity, asking the hard questions to the powerful, and quietly protecting the marginalized. They are doing the very things the church was called to do.

It leaves us bewildered, but in a deeply profound way. Is the Holy Spirit still choosing the institutional church to speak for the divine, or may the *Paraclete* have walked right past our beautiful, quiet sanctuaries to stand with movements such as these? If the elite choose to belittle struggling young people as nothing but pests, they shouldn't be surprised when the Holy Spirit may have used those very "cockroaches" to turn the wisdom upside down. After all, it is written: "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (1 Corinthians 1:27). ●

When Youth Raise Questions: A Prophetic Reading of Protest and Power

Barre Daniel Anurag

Introduction

Recent youth-led protests in India, captured vividly by the satirical Cockroach Janta Party, are more than a passing trend. Their popularity raises a basic question: what happens when a generation feels unheard? The ancient prophet Jeremiah offers a clear answer worth our attention.

Jeremiah: A Young Voice of Prophetic Protest

Jeremiah's prophetic journey begins with a confession that resonates with many young people today: "Oh, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" (Jer. 1:6). The Hebrew word *na'ar* suggests someone young and socially insignificant. Jeremiah did not see himself as a leader or revolutionary. Yet God called him to speak to kings, priests, and political authorities. His youth was

The prophet demonstrates that questioning authority is not necessarily an act of rebellion; it can be an act of moral responsibility. A healthy society should not fear difficult questions about unemployment, inequality, corruption, or institutional accountability. The prophetic tradition teaches that truth-telling is not the enemy of patriotism but one of its highest expressions.

not a disqualification but the very context in which his prophetic voice emerged. **Jeremiah reminds us that moral clarity is not the monopoly of the powerful, the elderly, or the established.**

What makes Jeremiah particularly relevant is that his protest was directed not against a secular society but against a deeply religious one. The people of Judah believed they were secure because they possessed the Temple of God. They repeated religious slogans and trusted in sacred symbols. Yet Jeremiah stood at the Temple gate and challenged this confidence: "Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the

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temple of the LORD'" (Jer. 7:4). **His point was not that religion was wrong, but that religion without justice becomes self-deception. The prophet exposed a dangerous tendency: using religious identity as a shield against moral accountability.**

Jeremiah's concern was fundamentally social. Again and again, he condemned the exploitation of the vulnerable, the poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners. He criticized economic greed, declaring that "from the least to the greatest, everyone is greedy for unjust gain" (Jer. 6:13). He confronted rulers who enriched themselves through the labor of others and denounced leaders who ignored the suffering of ordinary people. **For Jeremiah, injustice was not merely a political failure; it was a spiritual crisis.**

The prophet also challenged the abuse of political power. In Jeremiah 22, he directly rebuked King Jehoiakim for building his wealth through exploitation and denying workers their wages. Such criticism was dangerous. Jeremiah was mocked, beaten, imprisoned, and accused of undermining the nation. Many considered him unpatriotic (anti-national) because he refused to tell people what they wanted to hear. **Yet Jeremiah's loyalty was not to popular opinion but to truth. He understood that genuine love for one's nation sometimes requires the courage to expose its failures.**

This aspect of Jeremiah's ministry speaks powerfully to

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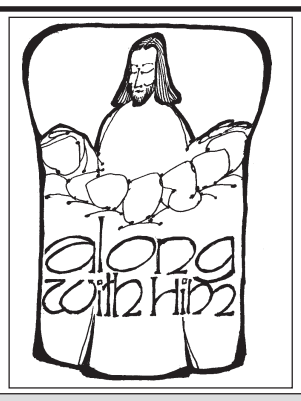

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Mammen Varkey

Post Easter Reflections

The Path of the Cross will Lead to Resurrection - 6

Was it not the declaration of their unwillingness to travel along the path of the Cross?

"On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you". When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the father has sent me, even so I send you". And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." John 20:19-23 (RSV)

It is very critically important to reflect deeply on how the Risen Master encountered his beloved disciples whom he had sent, as the Father had sent him, John 20:21, but, who so sadly, had gone for 'fishing'. Humanly thinking, it would be terribly disturbing that the Risen Master even after personally meeting them and interacting with them, and sending them to continue the mission they had been entrusted with, seven of them went back to their old life, the life of fishing.

It should be, definitely, normative for us, how the Risen Lord responded to such a terrible situation of seven of the specially chosen disciples, majority of the twelve, refused, in a way, to be sent out by him.

Many memories

Definitely, the Risen Master's words, 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you', would have brought to their active memory, what all things had happened in their Master's life even after he was sent by the Father. Many memories, sweet, very hard and painful, would have arisen in them!

Rejection of the paths/ ways of the world

When their Master began his public ministry, clearly manifesting the indwelling in him of the Holy Spirit, and the Father's approval of the way he chose, Luke 3:22, the first thing that he did was the unequivocal rejection, by overcoming the three temptations, of the paths/ ways of miracles, comfort and wealth, and power. Luke 4:1-13. In other words, though he began his ministry declaring, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand", Mark 1:14, he also categorically said that his way would not be the way of miracles, of power etc.

The way for the Good News to the poor

In Nazareth, in the synagogue, he read from the book of Isaiah, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" and said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing". Luke 4:18-20. Unhesitatingly he announced that his ministry was bringing Good News to the poor, giving release to the captives, liberating the oppressed etc. **But he very clearly made it public that his way was not of shallow prosperity, ease and comfort, force and power.**

Without leaving any element of doubt

Only three more incidents from the life of the Master are pointed out. Jesus told the man who wanted to follow him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head". Luke 9:57,58 (RSV). To all the disciples, to all those who wanted to follow him, Jesus, very clearly, said that his way was not a way of prosperity and comfort, wealth and possessions. And that his way was the way of the cross. On another occasion Jesus very bluntly said, ***"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me……" Mark 8:34,35. He made it quite clear that only those who were willing to take up the cross, would be able to follow him.*** And that his way was not easy, comfortable, safe self-aggrandizing way. In fact, when Simon Peter drew out the sword and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his right ear, Jesus powerfully told him, one of his chief disciples, ***"Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me? John 18:11. Leaving not even an element of doubt, Jesus was saying to Peter and his other disciples that his way was not the way of the sword, of force, power and position, but of the cross.***

They were sent along the path chosen by the Father for their Master

Having fully proved with his life that he absolutely fulfilled the Father's plan for him and fully journeyed through the way of the cross, and having proved to the disciples the approval of the Father with his resurrection, the Risen Master told them, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you". So it became quite clear to them that they were being sent along the path of the Cross.

An open declaration

The disciples' long interaction with Thomas must have re-inforced their hesitation to go along the path of the Cross. The going out for fishing of the seven disciples was an open declaration of their unwillingness to go out traversing the path of the cross. In a way, an open declaration of their rejection of the discipleship. It is here, how the Risen Master encountered them, becomes supremely important. ●

To be continued

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

Whom Are We with?

A. V. Itty

1 Cor 1:26-31

"God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise, and chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful" (v. 27).

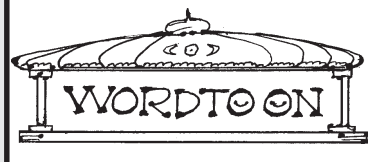
Samuel Moris was a person used very powerfully by God. He was brought up as the son of a village chieftain in West Africa. He had to face very tragic experiences from the childhood. There was a fight between his father and another village chieftain. In it, Moris's father was killed and Moris was taken as a bonded prisoner. He had to suffer many tortures, physical and mental. That changed his life. He started to have spiritual inclinations and became interested in it. He started thinking about spiritual matters and learning them. One day he had a vision of Christ, and that made him to accept Jesus as the Lord of his life. He lived for only twenty one years. Yet, he could lead thousands to salvation and transformation, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the Scripture portion we meditate upon, St. Paul suggests that God often selects those whom the world considers to be of no significance. Many of the early disciples of Christ were mere fisherfolk. Mary's song of praise (Lk. 1:46-55) is about such a selection of God. The word of God indicates that God is with the poor, the exploited and the neglected. When God selects somebody, He doesn't look at that person's family background or racial greatness or wealth.

He only considers whether the person is faithful or whether he will be available to Him.

Whom are we with? With God and with whom God selects, or with the powerful and the wise of the world? May God help us to take the right decision. ●

Prof. A. V. Itty, former Professor of English at Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara, is, now, engaged in the Evangelical, and Educational Ministry undertaken by ADORE in the Rayagada Dist. of Odisha. 94950 17850 (Mob)



MOVEMENTS
are meant to give you
MOMENTS
when you relentlessly
MOVE
to acheive your great
ENDS!

Food For Thought:

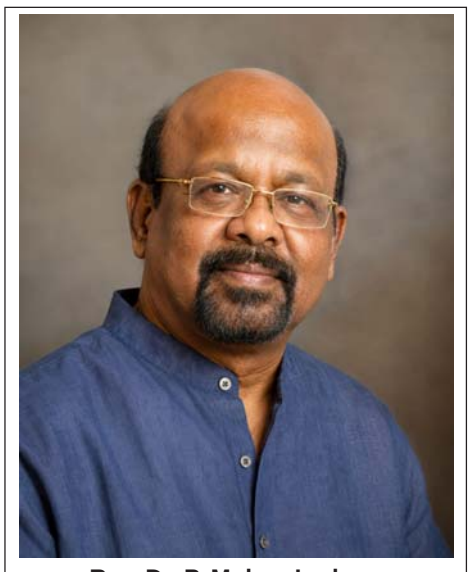
Good sculptor can create beautiful sculptures even out of wild stones!

Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer passed away on 17 June

A tribute to Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer

Making sense of Messiah to the oppressed

M. J. Vijayan



Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer

Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer's passing away on 17 June leaves behind a silence that is personal, political and theological. To many, he was a scholar of contextual theology, a former Principal of Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, a theological educator, and a respected voice in ecumenical circles. To some of us, he was also Mohan Uncle — a comrade of our homes, our movements, and our memories.

I have known him from childhood, through the deep comradeship he and Rev. Dr. Margaret Kalaiselvi shared with my parents, the late Rev. M. J. Joseph and Annamma Joseph. Their friendships were not merely social. They were formed in the heat of struggles, in the company of people who believed that faith must stand with the wounded, the excluded and the fighting poor. In that world, Mohan Larbeer was shaped not only by seminaries and books, but also by mentors such as the late Rev. Y. David and Prof. Ritamma David, and by the moral grammar of people's movements.

His theology was never an ornament of the academy. It was an instrument of listening. In his work on Dalit theology, social analysis and Christian public witness, he insisted that theology must descend from abstract doctrine into the mud, hunger, caste humiliation and political violence of everyday India. **He belonged to that generation which understood liberation not as a slogan, but as a discipline: to read scripture from below, to hear God from the margins, and to expose caste as a theological scandal.**

As coordinator of Partners in Justice Concerns and as a fellow traveller of PSA, Delhi Forum, INSAF, CISRS and other social action spaces, Mohan helped build bridges between church institutions and justice movements. Later, as teacher and Principal at TTS, and through wider responsibilities in theological education, he carried that same conviction into the classroom: that theological formation without social accountability is incomplete. He has contributed to the mission of the People's Reporter in many ways in the past through these pages.

The recently released volume, Grassroots Theology in Praxis: Festschrift in Honor of Rev. Dr. P. Mohan Larbeer, edited by Y. T. Vinayaraj and Inbaraj Jeyakumar, is therefore aptly named. It recognises a life lived at the intersection of scholarship, struggle and pastoral tenderness.

Mohan Larbeer's life does not call for exaggerated praise. It calls for continuation. To remember him truthfully is to keep theology accountable to the oppressed, and faith accountable to justice.

Mr. M. J. Vijayan is a Delhi based political analyst and writer. He heads the Participatory Action Research Coalition of India and is General Secretary, Pakistan India Peoples' Forum for Peace & Democracy

cheerchat

'Man is not made for defeat.
A man can be destroyed, but not defeated'.

– Ernest Hemingway

Christian Conference of Asia

an organ and fellowship of churches and ecumenical councils in asia for initiating and facilitating dynamic christian witness and action

CCA honours the leadership and legacy of outgoing General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara

Dr. Mathews George speaks as he concludes his two consecutive terms as the General Secretary of the CCA

Over the past two weeks, ecumenical friends and organisations from around the world have sent numerous messages of greetings and best wishes to Dr Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary and Chief Executive of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), as he concludes his two consecutive terms as head of the CCA.

The messages, both spoken and written, reflect the deep appreciation of churches, ecumenical organisations, colleagues, and friends for an Asian ecumenist whose more than three decades of dedicated service have left a lasting impact on the ecumenical movement both in Asia and at the global level.

To honour Dr. Chunakara's decade of leadership as the Tenth General Secretary of CCA, a special programme was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on 2 June 2026.

Many Church and Ecumenical leaders gathered to pay tribute to the internationally acclaimed Asian ecumenist as he concludes his tenure after leading the world's first regional ecumenical organisation for more than ten years. More than 100 international ecumenists, gathered.

Warm memories, heartfelt tributes, and inspiring reflections were shared by the ecumenical leaders who accompanied Dr. Chunakara throughout his ecumenical journey. They described him as one of the most distinguished ecumenical leaders of his generation, a prolific scholar, administrator, mentor, ecumenist, and humanist.

Many affirmed that, throughout his tenure, Dr. Chunakara demonstrated a deep commitment to justice, peace, reconciliation and the prophetic witness of the churches in responding to contemporary challenges. Under his leadership, CCA strengthened its mission and programmes, further establishing itself as a vibrant platform for cooperation, dialogue, and common witness among churches across the region. They also acknowledged that his profound understanding of Asia's geopolitical, cultural, religious, and ethnic realities has never been merely academic. Rather, it reflects wisdom cultivated through attentive listening, extensive travel, sustained dialogue, and faithful accompaniment of churches and communities across the diverse and complex Asian continent.

They also noted that, as General Secretary, Dr Chunakara guided CCA's growth into one of the world's most dynamic and respected regional ecumenical organisations. Under his stewardship, CCA gained renewed confidence and strengthened its credibility, integrity, leadership, and institutional capacity.

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara was the first Indian to be elected as head of the Christian Conference of Asia in its 70-year history. He was unanimously elected as General Secretary in 2015 and was subsequently re-elected for a second five-year term.

The Executive Committee of the CCA, also paid special tribute to Dr Chunakara for guiding CCA with renewed vision and for making significant contributions for strengthening its organisational capacities and institutional credibility during his decade of leadership. The Executive Committee further decided to publish a Festschrift in Dr. Chunakara's honour.

– CCA News

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A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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